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# BULLETIN

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Forrest Shreve, Secretary-Treasurer, Tucson, Arizona.

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### THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Although the election by the Ecological Society of its representative in the National Research Council was not completed in time for the first meetings in April, the Society was represented at these meetings by its President who happened to be on the council as member for the Society of American Foresters. The Ecological Society is one of the ten scientific bodies represented on the Division of Biology and Agriculture of the National Research Council. The purpose of the April meetings was to organize this Division. In order to gain a proper perspective of the relation of the Ecological Society to the Division of Biology and Agriculture and to the National Research Council as a whole, it is necessary to consider for a moment the development of the Council.

The National Research Council is an outgrowth of America's participation in the war. In April, 1916, soon after the attack on the "Sussex" and our demands upon Germany to cease submarine warfare, the President requested the National Academy of Science to organize the scientific resources of the country in the interest of national security and welfare. The Council was accordingly organized, and consisted at the end of the war of eight officers (chairman, vice chairman, etc.), an Executive Board, an Interim Committee, and eight Divisions. The chairman was Dr. George E. Hale.

So valuable was the Council found to be that the President perpetuated it by executive order of May 11th, 1918. Since this order gives the broad purpose of the Council in a few words it is here quoted in full.

"1. In general, to stimulate research in mathematical, physical and biological science, and in the application of these sciences to engineering, agriculture, medicine and other useful arts, with the object of increasing knowledge, of strengthening the national defense, and of contributing in other ways to the public welfare.

"2. To survey the larger possibilities of science, to formulate comprehensive projects of research, and to develop effective means of utilizing the scientific and technical resources of the country for dealing with these projects.

"3. To promote co-operation in research, at home and abroad, in order to secure concentration of effort, minimize duplication, and stimulate progress. but in all co-operative undertakings to give encouragement to individual initiative, as fundamentally important to the advancement of science.

"4. To serve as a means of bringing American and foreign investigators into active co-operation with the scientific and technical services of the War and Navy Departments and with those of the civil branches of the government.

"5. To direct the attention of scientific and technical investigators to the present importance of military and industrial problems in connection with the war, and to aid in the solution of these problems by organizing specific researches.

"6. To gather and collate scientific and technical information at home and abroad, in co-operation with governmental and other agencies and to render such information available to duly accredited persons."

The importance of the reorganization to a peace basis was fully realized. The basic principles of the organization

were worked out in a thorough and painstaking manner.

The question of selecting the members of the Council received careful study. Should the members be selected by the various institutions and organizations or by the leading scientific societies? It was essential that the members represent the main lines of scientific thought. The societies were called upon. In order to secure a well rounded membership, 9 out of the 25 men for each division were left to be elected by the division. Thus a thoroughly democratic representation is assured and at the same time there is an opportunity for filling in possible gaps in the subjects covered.

It was essential to secure stability and continuity of policy and yet avoid bureaucratic control. the tenure of office by the officers of the different divisions became a matter of the first importance. To reconcile the conflicting desiderata it was decided that the chairman of the division should be paid a salary and give his entire time to the work of the Council, establishing his residence in Washington. He serves for one year, the vice chairman automatically becoming chairman at the close of this term. A reasonable continuity is thus assured, and bureaucratic tendencies are avoided.

The first meeting of the Division of Biology and Agriculture was called for April 14th, and consisted of the members newly selected by the scientific societies together with the members of the Division of Agriculture, Botany, Forestry, Zoology and Fisheries under the war organization. None of the members selected by the societies had served under the war organization. It was therefore necessary to consider to factors in electing the nine members at large: First, continuity of the work already done by the old organization; second, the filling of gaps in research subjects so as to cover the various fields as nearly as possible. The discussion preceding the nominations revealed a number of important branches of biological research still unrepresented, which made it difficult to insure continuity by

choosing the members of the old organization, and at the same time cover all the fields.

The membership of the Division of Biology and Agriculture was given in Science for May 16, 1919.

On April 26th the Division of Biology and Agriculture came together again to complete its organization. It became evident that a number of questions in addition to the subjects discussed at the last meeting, would be brought up. To avoid confusion and gain a perspective of what lay before the Division each matter was brought up and explained in turn, but not discussed by the Division. Then each topic was again taken up, fully discussed by all the members, and acted upon. This gave perspective and made it possible to act on each question in relation to all the others and to the work of the Division as a whole.

The work of the Division will be done largely by committees. The committees so far formed may be divided into two broad classes: (a)—The general committee to deal with a certain subject, as for example, the committee on forestry; (b)—The special committee to handle a specific problem, as for example the committee on physiological salt requirements of certain cultivated plants. The membership of the different committees will probably vary according to the purpose of each and to the status of the work in hand. Some may be formed entirely of members of the Division; others partly of members and partly of men not in the Division; or else anyone, whether in the Division or not, may be requested to form a committee; in still other cases, committees already formed outside of the Council may be recognized and asked to co-operate. It must be borne in mind that the Division of Biology and Agriculture has only just been organized, and that the foregoing analysis is to be taken as a forecast of tendencies rather than as a statement of established facts recognized by the Division.

A list of the committees which have been carried over from the old organization by action of the new Division or

have been authorized or recognized will give some idea of the scope of the work.

#### **Committees continued from the War Organization**

Fertilizers—(for food production in the war ; now co-operating with the War Department in utilization of the by products of explosives.)

Physiological Salt Requirements of certain cultivated plants.

Protein Metabolism in animal feeding.

Forestry—(authorized by war organization and specifically requested by new Division to go ahead.)

#### **New Committees.**

Fellowships.

Publications and Bibliography.

Cooperation.

Education—(to consider gaps in the field of biology and how these gaps may best be filled.)

Research projects—(to collect and publish possible projects.)

Tropical work—(to consider botanical and zoological exploration and establishment of permanent research station. Will probably also cover temperate South America.)

Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory—(a special Committee to investigate and report on desirability of the Council extending recognition to this institution.)

Phytopathological—(recognition of the already formed Advisory Board of the Phytopathological Society as a committee of the Division.)

The matter of funds for the work of the Division was left in considerable uncertainty. The Council appears to have sufficient resources in the President's emergency fund to defray the expenses of the members called to Washington. But the rest of the work of the Division, the fellowships, publications, cooperation, etc., will require consider-

able additional money. For the present the Division must depend on private resources, such as the large foundations and private gifts.

The most noteworthy and hopeful feature of the meetings of the Division of Biology and Agriculture was the splendid spirit of harmony. The desire for closer unity and whole hearted cooperation was universal; and there was a conspicuous absence of seeking to get something for the particular society or organization represented.

The National Research Council can be of value to science only if science stands squarely behind the Council. The creation of the Council in 1916 is undoubtedly one of the most significant scientific events which has ever occurred in the United States. It meant the mobilization of the scientific forces of the country to win the war; the re-organization on a peace basis means the holding together of these forces for the general welfare. The National Research Council embodies America's determination to take advantage of the opportunity which lies before science today. Such an opportunity there never has been before, and probably never will be again.

#### COMMITTEE ON COOPERATION

Dr. C. C. Adams of Syracuse University has been appointed as one of the zoological members of the Committee on Cooperation. Three members of this committee have met in the field in New York state for a preliminary study of their problems and for the placing of instruments. Several days were spent on Mt. Marcy and Mt. McIntyre in the Adirondacks.